

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BANGUI 1121

EXDIS

NOFORN

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS CT
SUBJ: MAY 10 CABINET MEETING

1. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN GIVEN IN GREAT CONFIDENCE THE TEXT OF THE MINUTES OF AN "EXTRAORDINARY" CABINET MEETING HELD AT THE IMPERIAL COURT OF BERENGO ON MAY 10, 1977. THE MEETING, OVER WHICH THE EMPEROR PERSONALLY PRESIDED, WAS ATTENDED BY PRIME MINISTER PATASSE AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND BY FORMER PRESIDENT DACKO AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THE MEETING IS SIGNIFICANT AS AN INDICATION OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE EMPEROR IS IN DIRECT CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OF HIS POLITICAL PREOCCUPATIONS AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE MEETING ALSO PROVIDES A USEFUL INSIGHT INTO THE STATUS OF VARIOUS SENIOR CENTRAL AFRICAN OFFICIALS. BOKASSA COMES ACROSS AS IN COMPLETE CONTROL BUT BESET BY PETTY PREOCCUPATIONS. THOSE, PLUS THE TOTAL DEFERENCE PAID TO HIM BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED ANY SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION AT THIS PARTICULAR CABINET MEETING, ALTHOUGH MANY IMPORTANT ISSUES WERE TOUCHED UPON.

2. THE MEETING BEGAN WITH BOKASSA'S SHARP CRITICISM OF MINISTER

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OF STATE POTOLOT FOR HAVING MET WITH THE CONGOLESE PRESIDENT IN BRAZZAVILLE. BOKASSA SAID THIS MEETING WAS NOT AUTHORIZED AND THAT HENCEFORWARD POTOLOT WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO GO ON FOREIGN MISSIONS. IN FUTURE NO FOREIGN MISSIONS WERE TO TAKE PLACE WITHOUT THE EMPEROR'S PRIOR CONCURRENCE.

3. BOKASSA THEN DISCUSSED THE "PREOCCUPYING" SITUATION IN AFRICA

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EXPLOITATION OF THE BAKOUMA URANIUM DEPOSITS. HE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE COUNTRY'S FRIENDS WHO WERE TRYING TO DEVELOP THE DEPOSITS. OTHERS WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED IN UNDER A CLOAK OF IDEOLOGY--"THE REDS WILL NOT GET INTO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE". (COMMENT: WHILE THE REPORT OF THE DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE WAS HIGHLY ELLIPTICAL IT APPEARS THAT BOKASSA FEARS THE RUSSIANS ARE TRYING TO UNDERCUT THE FRANCO-SWISS COMPANY WHICH IS TO DEVELOP THE BAKOUMA DEPOSITS BY CATEGORIZING IT AS ANOTHER CASE OF CAPITALIST AND IMPERIALIST EXPLOITATION).

4. BOKASSA ALSO STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE BEHAVIOR OF FORMER MINISTER LOUIS ALAZOULA AND HIS SCANDALOUS LIFE OF SIN WITH ANOTHER FORMER MINISTER MARIE FAYANGA. HE ADDRESSED A WARNING TO COURT MINISTER SAGANZA TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO HIS WORK, AND MME. FAYANGA WAS REBUKED FOR ENGAGING IN TRIBALISM BY PROCLAIMING THE FACT THAT SHE IS FROM THE OUHAM PREFECTURE. (COMMENT: THE OUHAM IS THE CENTER OF THE POWERFUL BAYA TRIBE, WHICH HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN CONSIDERED A DISSIDENT GROUP OF WHOSE LOYALTY BOKASSA HAS LONG BEEN SUSPICIOUS).

5. THERE WAS ALSO CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROLE AND PERFORMANCE. BOKASSA CRITICIZED THE DECISION TO PUT PRISONERS BACK ON THE GOVERNMENT PAYROLL, WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WAS UNWILLING TO REIMBURSE THE EMPEROR FOR HIS PERSONAL EXPENSES. BOKASSA SAID SOMEWHAT PETULANTLY THAT THIS WAS AN HOSTILE GESTURE TOWARDS HIM. HE ALSO COMPLAINED THAT HE HAD NOT RECEIVED HIS ALLOWANCE OF GASOLINE SINCE DECEMBER 4. PATASSE RESPONDED WITH AN ABJECT APOLOGY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT HE MIGHT BE A BAD PRIME MINISTER AND MIGHT HAVE MADE MISTAKES, ALTHOUGH IN GOOD FAITH.

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BOKASSA IN A GESTURE OF GENEROSITY SAID THAT PATASSE COULD NOT BE A BAD PRIME MINISTER SINCE THAT WOULD MEAN AS EMPEROR HE HAD MADE A BAD CHOICE. THE EMPEROR THEN MADE CLEAR THAT IN FUTURE FILES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO HIM FOR DECISION BOTH THROUGH HIS JUDICIAL COUNSELLOR AND HIS PERSONAL COUNSELLOR DAVID DACKO.

6. THE MEETING TOUCHED ON VARIOUS OTHER ISSUES AS BOKASSA SKIPPED FROM SUBJECT TO SUBJECT. HE SAID THAT CIVIL SERVANTS SHOULD ENGAGE IN AGRICULTURE, ALL THE DEBTS OF THE STATE SHOULD BE PAID PROMPTLY, THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY SHOULD BE RESPECTED AND DIGNITY SHOULD BE RESTORED TO THE COUNTRY. FEW CONCRETE DECISIONS WERE TAKEN. THE TONE OF THE MEETING WAS HORTATORY WITH THE EMPEROR MAKING CLEAR AT EVERY STEP THAT HE WAS IN CHARGE AND THAT HE WOULD SET DOWN THE BROAD LINES OF POLICY FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: IF THIS MEETING IS TYPICAL -- AND WE SUSPECT IT IS -- IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY SO LITTLE GETS DONE IN THE GOCAE. THERE IS NO ORGANIZED EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS AND PROBLEMS. INSTEAD, TOPICS COME UP HAPHAZARDLY AND DISCUSSION

CONSISTS OF EXHORTATION BY BOKASSA. MINISTERS AND OTHER OFFICIALS
APPEAR FEARFUL OF DISMISSAL OR WORSE FOR SOME MINOR ACTION WHICH
MAY PROVOKE IMPERIAL DISPLEASURE. BOKASSA'S DIRECT INTERVENTION
IN DAY TO DAY AFFAIRS, WHICH HAD DECREASED SOMEWHAT FOLLOWING
PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE IN DECEMBER, IS EVIDENTLY INCREASING.
WITH IT WILL PROBABLY DISAPPEAR THE DISPOSITION AMONG MINISTERS
TO ORGANIZE THEIR DEPARTMENTS EFFECTIVELY AND TO WORK FOR MORE
EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING.

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